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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 PRISTINA 000829

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KV, YI

SUBJECT: KOSOVO'S WATER SYSTEM: INTERDEPENDENCE OF NORTH
AND SOUTH MAKES SABOTAGE UNLIKELY

REF: A. PRISTINA 542

[1](#)B. PRISTINA 757

[1](#)C. PRISTINA 810

Classified By: COM TINA KAIDANOW FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: Gazivoda reservoir, located in the northern Serb-majority municipality of Zubin Potok, is Kosovo's largest body of water and a vital resource for both Kosovo Albanian and Kosovo Serb communities. The lake supplies drinking water to areas of northern Kosovo and essential cooling water to major industries, including power and nickel production, through a complex system of dam and canal networks. Major economic development projects are also dependent on Gazivoda remaining an accessible and viable resource. In a worst case scenario, sabotage to these delivery systems could reduce or completely disrupt the supply of electricity to all of Kosovo, since Gazivoda is the sole source of cooling water at present for the Kosovo B energy plant located just outside of Pristina, but in our view the interdependence of Kosovo Albanians and Serbs with regard to this water system makes sabotage a fairly remote possibility.

[1](#)2. (C) Summary, cont. Gazivoda provides drinking water for the northern municipality of Zvecan and for some Albanian communities south of the Ibar river, about 15% of Kosovo's population. Drinking water for the greater Pristina area, about 33% of the population, is supplied from the Batllava and Badovc reservoirs, located in Albanian-majority areas. The remaining 52% of Kosovo's population derives potable water from other independent sources located within Kosovo. The Kosovo government and relevant international actors, including KFOR, are aware of the importance of preserving and protecting Gazivoda and its assets, and are closely monitoring the situation. In the longer term, the possibility of decoupling northern Kosovo's water system from the rest of Kosovo does exist; we and our European partners will want to ensure that such a decoupling is not used by Belgrade as a means to impede the development and well-being of an independent Kosovo. END SUMMARY.

Overview of Gazivoda and the Ibar Canal System

13. (SBU) Gazivoda reservoir, located in the northern Serb-majority municipality of Zubin Potok, is contained by a large earthen dam. Untreated water is released from the dam through two electric turbines capable of generating 32 kilowatts of power, about 5 percent of Kosovo's total energy production. The turbines handle excess power demand for the Kosovo Electric Corporation's (KEK) power plants (Kosovo A and B). Discharge water from the turbines is collected by the smaller Pridvorica reservoir and dam, located below Gazivoda. From Pridvorica, water can be released through four controlled gates into the Ibar canal system or into the Ibar river itself.

14. (SBU) The main canal is open and approximately 31 miles long, with 472 miles of underground pipes. The canal operates by gravity feed, making pumps unnecessary along the canal itself. Pridvorica dam releases up to 4,000 liters/second into the canal during peak demand periods. Normal release is 2,000 liters/second. The water travels from Pridvorica to a pumping station in Lushta village, where 600-700 liters/second is pumped from the canal to the Shipol water treatment plant, run by the Mitrovica Regional Water Company based in south Mitrovica. Both the pumping station and the water treatment plant are located just to the southwest of Mitrovica city, thus in an Albanian-majority area. Shipol provides drinking water to both Mitrovica north and south, the latter including the Albanian area of Stari Trg; to the northern Serb-majority municipality of Zvecan; and to the Albanian-majority municipalities of Skenderaj and Vushtrri. The remaining northern Serb-majority municipalities of Leposavic and Zubin Potok rely on natural

PRISTINA 00000829 002 OF 004

water resources independent of Gazivoda. The pump at Lushta is one of three operative pumping stations along the canal, and the only one in regular use.

15. (SBU) The Ibar canal continues south to Obilic, supplying vital cooling water for the Kosovo B power plant at a rate of 800 liters/second. Just before Obilic, the canal splits and supplies water to a treatment facility for potable consumption by Drenas village and industrial water for the Ferronikeli nickel factory at 200 liters/second. The canal also irrigates approximately 2,470 acres of farmland en route, using 300 liters/second. Overall, Gazivoda and the Ibar canal system supply - at most - 15% of Kosovo with drinking water. The rest of Kosovo obtains water from other natural sources.

16. (SBU) Physically, the canal is antiquated and leaky. Tim Westmoreland, Water Sector Head for UMMIK's Water, Irrigation and Waste Division, estimates the canal loses about one third of the water released from Pridvorica en route to final destinations. Illegal connections to the system for irrigation, sewage and drinking needs further exacerbate loss.

Industrial Reliance on Gazivoda

17. (C) Cooling water supplied by Gazivoda to the Ferronikeli nickel factory and the KEK power plant is essential for the continued operation of these facilities. Ferronikeli, located west of Pristina in Gllogovc, has no alternate water source at this time and would have to cease operations if Gazivoda were no longer an option. According to local news reports, the 1,000-employee nickel factory is expected to substantially increase production to 10-12 thousand tons per year in 2008, an important future source of revenue for Kosovo industry.

18. (C) KEK's Kosovo B power plant receives cooling water exclusively from the Ibar canal. The Kosovo A plant draws cooling water from the river Llap, replenished by natural rainfall and the Batllava reservoir, located about 15 miles

northeast of Pristina, when needed. According to USAID advisors at KEK, the Kosovo B plant could continue operating for a maximum of six hours after being cut off from the canal water supply, and for possibly 12 hours if the plant is run at minimal load. KEK is currently working to install a water supply pipe from the Llap river to Kosovo B as a short-term emergency measure, an effort that could take up to several months to complete; however, the river is not a suitable year-round source for both the A and B plants. The Llap usually runs low during the summer months and is supplemented by releasing water from Batllava reservoir into the river. Supplying both power plants long-term could drain the reservoir too quickly and put Pristina's drinking water at risk. If the Kosovo B plant had to be shut down completely, Kosovo would be forced to import energy from other sources -- assuming supplies were available -- at considerable expense. (The possible impact of Kosovo A and/or B being taken completely off-line is detailed in Ref B.)

Gazivoda as a Future Source of Drinking Water

¶9. (C) Batllava and Badovc reservoirs, the latter located about 10 miles southeast of Pristina, supply drinking water to the capital and surrounding areas, but Gazivoda is considered a back-up water source if rainfall is inadequate to replenish these reservoirs. The canal system to bring this alternate water supply to the area is not presently functional but the severe drought Kosovo experienced last winter and summer (Ref A) has prompted an extensive clean-up and repair of the back-up supply system. In the long-term, this back-up water source has been identified for even larger projects. The Pristina Regional Water Company (PRWC) is planning to build another water treatment facility to meet growing demand from Pristina and surrounding areas. Skender

PRISTINA 00000829 003 OF 004

Bublaku, Managing Director of PRWC, predicted the new facility would use 1,000-1,500 liters/second and fulfill drinking water needs in the Pristina area for the next 25 years. Pristina currently uses 900 liters/second for two water treatment facilities located near Batllava and Badovc, reduced from 1,200 liters/second in order to allow the reservoirs recovery time from the drought. Parts of Pristina still do not have water 24 hours a day, mainly during the night, due to this conservation effort. PRWC supplies about 33% of Kosovo's population with potable water.

Future Projects' Dependence on Gazivoda

¶10. (C) Other future projects dependent on Gazivoda include the currently inactive Trepca mining complex at both Mitrovica and Gracanica. Also of critical importance to the stability of Kosovo's future energy supply is KEK's proposed Kosovo "C" power plant project. Gazivoda is the only sustainable and viable source of cooling water for these facilities. Without access to this resource, these projects will not be possible.

Gazivoda Security

¶11. (C) Gazivoda dam itself is operated by 43 Kosovo Serb employees, recruited from Zubin Potok municipality and directly employed by the Iber Lepenc canal company, a publicly owned enterprise of the Kosovo Trust Agency. Abdullah Nishori, Director of Iber Lepenc, told USOP that relations between management and staff are good but pointed out that 21 employees at Gazivoda are actually being paid by the Serbian public utility company, Ibar, and have refused to sign contracts with Iber Lepenc. The remaining 22 employees have current contracts but Nishori anticipates they will choose not to renew in spring 2008, to demonstrate solidarity with Serbia. All Serb employees are nevertheless likely to remain on the job, still pulling salaries from the Serbian utility company, unless instructed otherwise by Belgrade.

¶12. (C) Iber Lepenc has guards stationed at the turbines and

the Pridvorica dam 24 hours a day. Nishori views the release gates at Pridvorica dam as potentially vulnerable points, suggesting that damage to these structures could flood the surrounding area, including all of Mitrovica. However, the control of the release gates could be even more critical. Completely closing the gates would cut off water to all sites along the Ibar canal. PRWC's Managing Director Bublaku estimates 300,000 people, Serbs and Albanians, would be without water in northern Kosovo and areas south of the Ibar river, and the Ferronikeli factory and the Kosovo B power plant would eventually be inoperative.

¶13. (C) Alternately, in a scenario outlined by UNMIK water expert Westmoreland, water flow from the release gates could be reduced from the standard 2,000 liters/second to 1,000 liters/second. The Shipol treatment plant could theoretically continue to pump out the 700 liters/second required for drinking water but there would be essentially no water left for Kosovo B at the end of the canal, given rate of water loss en route and other illegal connections. This would also adversely affect Ferronikeli.

¶14. (C) Sabotage to the delivery canal itself is also a possibility and would be a low-cost, low-effort option to cause general problems and frustration. Even if not of a permanent nature, such action could have multiplying effects, for example, if repairs could not be performed in time to avoid a complete shut down of the Kosovo B plant. The sheer length of the canal makes permanently stationed guards impractical, although the majority of the system runs through Albanian-populated areas, substantially decreasing the likelihood of sabotage. KFOR has already mounted regular patrols around the lake, dam and canal (in close coordination with UNMIK police) and if indicators warrant, will increase its activities in the critical areas.

PRISTINA 00000829 004 OF 004

Potential long-term threat

¶15. (C) Preserving access to Gazivoda will be critical for Kosovo's future development. While in our estimation the likelihood of short-term sabotage is low given the interdependence of the system, with water from Gazivoda treated in Albanian-majority south Mitrovica and then pumped back into the Serb north, Gazivoda could be used as a tool by Belgrade in the longer term to cut off reservoir access to the Albanian majority south of the Ibar river. Violete Hoxha, Director of the Water Department for the Ministry of Environment, told us that the Serbian public utility Ibar has announced plans to build a large water treatment plant in north Mitrovica to supply northern Kosovo and southern Serbia from Gazivoda. Though probably many months away, this development could effectively isolate the rest of Kosovo from Gazivoda.

¶16. (C) Our European Commission counterparts noted in a recent meeting that the current Serbian national investment plan allocates some 15 million euro for water projects in northern Kosovo. To counter this threat, acting EC Head of Office Renzo Daviddi told USOP that the EC is offering large-scale funding (up to 15 million euro) for a project to dramatically increase capacity at the Shipol treatment plant and build a completely new treatment facility in Vushtrri, south of Mitrovica. Both facilities would increase supply to northern Kosovo, encourage interdependence, and make the proposed Serbian treatment plant in north Mitrovica redundant. Daviddi was uncertain, however, whether Serb authorities in northern Kosovo would agree to accept such funding in lieu of the public expenditure from Belgrade, though he said there had been some initial interest.

COMMENT

¶17. (C) The interdependent nature of the Kosovo's huge Gazivoda reservoir and the existing water supply system --

which affects both the Serb and Albanian communities -- makes it an unlikely target for serious sabotage. More, the system is too extensive to protect fully, and the few key nodes are already under patrol by KFOR to deter the potential for low-level mischief. USOP will stay in close communication with both local and international contacts monitoring the situation at Gazivoda and along the Ibar canal. In the longer term, we, along with our European partners, will want to make certain this interdependence is strengthened or at the very least not weakened; otherwise, a vital water resource with enough potential to help develop all Kosovo, north and south, could be used as a political tool by Belgrade to seriously impede the future well-being of an independent Kosovo.

KAIDANOW